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Draft report

Addendum

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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001 (item 4 (b))

Section 11A. Trade and development

1. At its 16th meeting, on 16 June 1999, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 11A, Trade and development, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001 (A/54/6 (Sect. 11A)).

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced the budget section and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration thereof.

Discussion

3. The view of the importance of the activities of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which is the focal point within the United Nations system for the integrated treatment of trade, finance, technology, investment and sustainable development, was stressed. Accordingly, the significance of the programme as a whole was emphasized.

4. It was noted that the structure and presentation of the programme had improved and that this trend should continue. It was generally agreed that the programme of work fully reflected the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001 and that the deliberations of the Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and the Programme Budget had been taken into account.

5. The view was expressed on the importance of UNCTAD's contribution to the follow-up of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. In particular, UNCTAD had an important role in assisting African countries in the area of securing greater market access, enhancing export value-added, identifying trade policy options and their rights and obligations under the rules of the World Trade Organization, attracting foreign direct investment and managing external debt. The programme budget needed to reflect those activities in a clearer and prominent manner, including through an appropriate level of resources.

6. The importance of the programme was stressed, in particular that of subprogramme 5, Least developed, landlocked and island developing countries.

7. Great importance was attached to the tenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development,

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the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries and the Fourth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices.

8. The importance of activities related to technology in the context of capacity-building in developing countries was pointed out. The need to strengthen those activities for developing countries and countries with economies in transition was also mentioned.

9. The view was expressed that the issue of development of skills training, human resources development in small and medium-sized enterprises and skills development of disadvantaged groups should also be given attention in programme activities to be undertaken by UNCTAD.

10. The view was expressed for enhanced attention by UNCTAD to the current difficulties of countries with economies in transition, in fields such as privatization, financial and banking system, small and medium-sized enterprises, investments and others.

11. The view was expressed that UNCTAD had a major role to play in the process relating to the high-level intergovernmental event on financing for development. It was emphasized that the UNCTAD secretariat should continue to participate in and provide support to the preparatory process of that event, as well as to assist the developing countries in that regard. The proposed programme budget did not reflect that, a fact which should be rectified, and specific activities and the manner in which it would be implemented should be clearly mentioned.

12. The view was expressed that a reference to General Assembly resolution 51/167 of 16 December 1996, by which the Assembly endorsed the Midrand Declaration, "A Partnership for Growth and Development", should be included in paragraph 11A.14 of the proposed programme budget.

13. The view was expressed with regard to the support that UNCTAD should provide with regard to the establishment of capacity-building in developing countries for future international trade negotiations, particularly for the third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization.

14. With respect to financial resources, concern was expressed regarding the proposed level of resources in view of the heavy programme of work. It was felt that the distribution of resources among the five subprogrammes should be more balanced. In that connection, the importance of subprogramme 1 was highlighted. At the same time, however, it was noted that budgetary constraints would not enable greater redeployment among the subprogrammes.

15. As regards human resources, the decreasing number of posts, especially in certain priority areas of work, was noted with concern. Observations regarding the high level of resources under consultants were made and the importance of clearly delineating the responsibilities of the staff, consultants and members of ad hoc expert groups was also mentioned.

16. The view was expressed that the Committee had not received a satisfactory explanation of the specific purpose for which ad hoc expert groups would be convened.

17. The view was expressed that savings achieved by UNCTAD should remain within the organization and that subprogramme 5, Least developed, landlocked and island developing countries, should be given closer attention in terms of resource allocation.

18. Concern was expressed that the scope of international cooperation and inter-agency coordination and liaison (para. 11A.25 (c)) had been expanded, as compared with the programme budget for 1998–1999, to include "civil society, notably non-governmental organizations, professional associations, trade unions and academia, as well as the business community" without mentioning the legislative authority to do so and whether that would entail a redistribution of resources.

19. The view was also expressed that the follow-up on evaluation of activities should continue, that further thought should be given on how to measure the expected accomplishments and that duplication of the activities of regional economic commissions and other relevant organizations should be avoided. The view was also expressed that further thought should be given to the feasibility of expected accomplishments in the section.

Conclusions and recommendations

20. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of section 11A, Trade and development, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001.

21. The Committee noted that the Trade and Development Board had yet to take a decision on the programme of work of UNCTAD for the biennium 2000–2001. The Committee therefore recommended to the General Assembly that it consider the programme narrative of section 11A in the light of the decision that the Trade and Development Board might take thereon.

22. The Committee recommended the deletion, in table 11A.23 of section 11A, of the text dealing with the Committee for Programme and Coordination since that text did not reflect recommendations of the Committee.

23. The Committee recommended that the UNCTAD secretariat should continue to participate in and provide support to the preparatory process of the high-level intergovernmental event on financing for development as well as to assist the developing countries in that regard.

24. The Committee took note of UNCTAD's contribution to the follow-up of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and recommended that UNCTAD continue its important role in assisting African countries in that regard.

25. The Committee stressed the importance of the programme, in particular subprogramme 5, Least developed, landlocked and island developing countries. The Committee emphasized the importance of the office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries and also the work on those countries carried out in all divisions of UNCTAD.